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ABSTRACT

Lack of data on California high school graduation and dropout rates prompted the development of a research method for determining graduation and dropout rates for the Region II Migrant Education enrolled high school Class of 1985. The most accurate method of estimating these rates was to track individual students through their high school years. Migrant Education Resource Specialists (RSs) were questioned about the Class of 1985 students who attended their schools. A survey containing the names of all migrant students enrolled in the ninth grade at each RSs school in 1981 was mailed in the late spring 1985; 78% returned their surveys. RSs accounted for 86% of the 686 students in the study. Of these Region II students, 63% graduated high school in 4 years, 26% were confirmed dropouts, 4% remained in school as overage seniors, and 7% of data was "missing". Thus, the total of potential dropouts is 37%, slightly lower than the statewide Hispanic dropout rate of 39%. Based on the study, two recommendations were made: to gather information on all disenrollments, and to document the reasons students drop out. With this information, special dropout prevention programs could be developed. A sample survey form is appended. (JMM)

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A REPORT ON DROPOUT AND GRADUATION RATES FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1985 IN REGION II MIGRANT CHILD EDUCATION

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The high school dropout and graduation rates for Hispanics, especially Migrant Hispanics, has been a subject of controversy for some time. The popular press continues to suggest that the graduation rate among migrant students is low:

> "The number of migrant students who graduate from high school is still abysmally low eighteen years after landmark legislation created Migrant Education programs.... Studies [not cited] show that ... ninety percent of all migrant children drop out by twelfth grade" (Sacramento Bee, 4/2/85).

Unfortunately, California does not systematically gather data on high school graduation and dropout rates, so it is difficult to confirm or deny statements such as this. This lack of data led to the commission of a study by Region II Migrant Child Education on the graduation and dropout rates of their students. The purpose of the study was to develop a research method to determine the graduation and dropout rates for the Region II Migrant Education enrolled high school Class of 1985.

The first step of the study was to examine available statistics on California

high school graduation and dropout rates. As noted above, these outcome measures are not systematically collected or reported, even at the school site level. Therefore, reported dropout and graduation rates are often estimated using other sources of data.

The most common estimate of dropouts is based on attrition rates in high schools. For example, the California Assembly Office of Research recently (1985) released a report in which the dropout rate was estimated by using the high school enrollment attrition rate. The attrition rate is the difference between the number of ninth grade students enrolled in 1981 and twelfth grade students enrolled in 1985. Their assumption is that the attrition rate is an accurate estimate of the dropout rate. However, this measure could be strongly influenced by the movement of students in and out of the state. This would of course be more pronounced for Hispanic students, whose numbers are rapidly growing, and especially for Migrant Education students who by definition are highly migratory. Another problem with the report is that the dropout rate for Hispanic students is reported, at 39%, but the rate for Migrant students as a sub-group are not. It would be improper to use the data on Hispanics to estimate the dropout rate for Migrant Education students, since Migrant Education students make up only a small proportion of all Hispanic students and because Migrant Education embraces other cultural groups.

The evaluation team decided that the most accurate way to determine graduation and dropout rates in Region II was to track individual students through their high school years. The Region II high school Class of 1985 was chosen for the study. Tracking these students from kindergarten through twelfth grade would have been nearly impossible, so it was decided to follow these students from ninth through twelfth grade.

One of the first tasks in the study was to define categories into which each student might fall during high school. Students who graduated, either early or with their class in June, 1985 comprised the first group, called "Graduates". Students who were enrolled in Migrant Education as ninth graders were counted even if they lost eligibility or were disenrolled sometime during high school (which accounted for about 30% of the sample). The reasoning is that Migrant Education probably made an impact on their academic career even if they lost eligibility during high school. The second group was labeled "Dropouts";

students who left high school. Some students were still in school the year after their classmates graduated; this group was labeled "Still in school". The last category was "Missing Data", made up of students for whom no information was available.

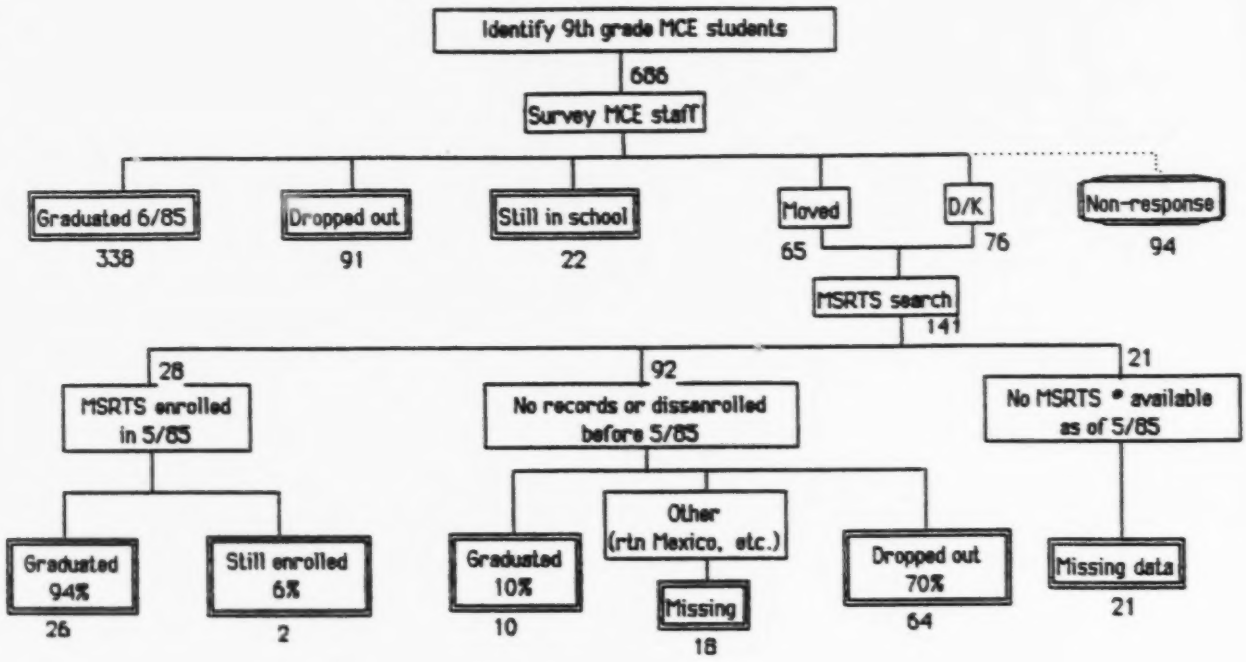
The decision to do research on students who were already out of the school system (in most cases) meant that the study was dependent on existing records, and on the memories of Migrant Education staff members. Unfortunately, there was very little information available from existing records. The number of graduates is reported each year by Migrant Education, but records on other outcomes are not available. Therefore, the decision was made to question the Migrant Education Resource Specialists (the certificated Migrant Education staff in the high schools; R.S.'s) about the Class of 1985 students who attended their schools. Discussions with several Resource Specialists indicated that they were familiar with many of the students in question and in most cases could distinguish between a dropout and a student who simply moved.

A survey was developed (see attached) which contained the names of all the Migrant students who were enrolled in ninth grade at each R.S.'s school in 1981. The R.S.'s were asked to identify whether the student had moved, graduated or dropped out (see attached). These surveys were mailed in late spring, 1985. A reminder survey was sent to non-respondents several months later.

After the second mailing, 78% of the Resource Specialists had returned their surveys. The Resource Specialists were able to account for 86% of the 686 students in the study. We feel that the information provided by the Resource Specialists is accurate, although there is certainly some small fraction of error due to faulty memory. Missing data was categorized in two ways; missing data from unreturned surveys, and data from returned surveys where the Resource Specialist did not know what happened to certain students. For the purpose of this project, we can assume that the relative proportion of students in each category (graduate, dropout, moved, and missing) would have been about the same for the unreturned R.S. surveys as they were on the returned surveys. Therefore, the students on these missing forms have been excluded from the study, leaving a sample population of 592 for this study. The survey

response information is described below in the Figure 1, along with the number of responses in each catagory.

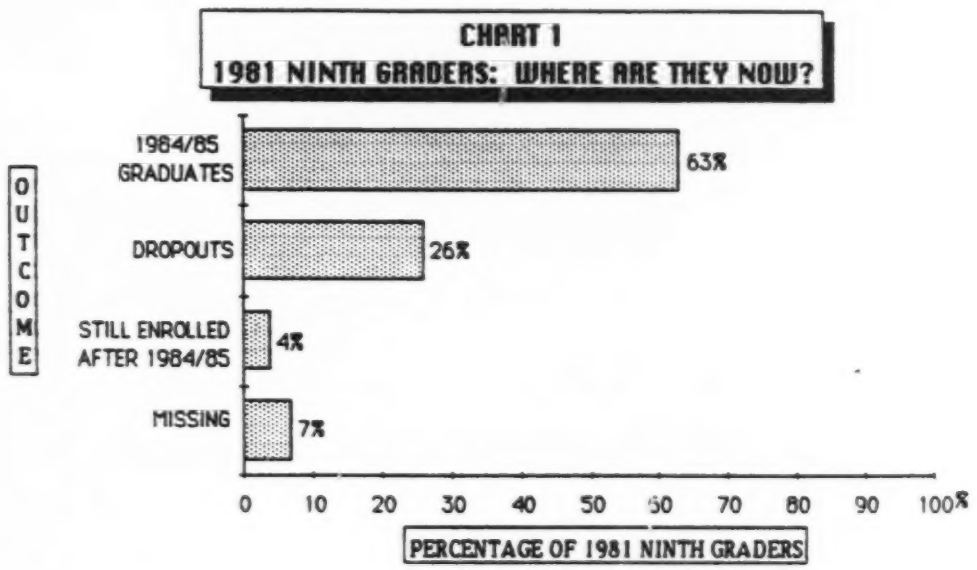
FIGURE 1
GRADUATION RATE STUDY - PROJECT STRATEGY



As Figure 1 indicates, all but 141 of the 592 students in the sample group were accounted for by the R.S.'s. A second research strategy was employed for these 141 missing cases. The students' MSRTS number was recorded from the ninth grade enrollment forms, and a search for each student was undertaken on the MSRTS system. If the students re-enrolled in the Migrant program after they moved or dropped, this information was available on the computer. If they were still enrolled in June,1985 and were subsequently disenrolled, we were fairly certain that they graduated and were classified as such. Some portion of students remained "missing", with no further MSRTS records found. The result of the MSRTS search is also shown on Figure 1.

No MSRTS number could be found for 21 of the students, so no further information could be accessed. Twenty-eight of the students were enrolled on MSRTS in May, 1985; we calculated that 94% of these students had probably graduated, based on the ratio of graduates to those still enrolled in the Region. For the largest group, 92 students, no re-enrollment could be found after they left Region II, or they enrolled after leaving but were dissenrolled before May, 1985. We made conservative assumptions that 70% of this group dropped out, 10% graduated (they may have disenrolled due to loss of eligibility, but still graduated), and 20% were catagorized as missing data.

The overall findings of the study are graphically presented in Chart 1, below.



The surprising result of the study was that 63% of ninth grade migrant students in Region II graduated high school in four years. Confirmed dropouts made up 26% of the sample, while 4% remained in school as overage seniors and 7% of the data was "missing". Some of the students who remained in school probably graduated eventually, although it is known that being overage is one of the largest reasons for dropping out. It is difficult to guess how many of the

"missing data" students might have dropped or graduated. Even assuming that all of the students in the "missing" and "still in school" groups dropped out, this would bring the total percent of dropouts to 37%, which is slightly lower than the statewide Hispanic dropout rate of 39% (according to the Assembly Office of Research report). The evaluation team feels that these figures are conservative estimates, and that the Region II dropout rate is probably several percentage points below 37%.

In conclusion, it seems clear that the droppout rate for Migrant students in Region II is lower than that of Hispanic students throughout the state. This is not to say that there is not a dropout problem; indeed, fully a third of Region II ninth graders were shown not to have graduated. However, the problem does not seem as large as was commonly thought by the Region staff before the study, and it is in proportion to, and perhaps smaller than, the problem of Hispanic students in general. The study did not measure the degree to which the Migrant Education program may have influenced this groups' success because we do not know what the dropout rate would have been without the program. However, there are compelling reasons to assume that migrant children have special problems which would lead to a higher dropout rate than the general Hispanic population if not for the Migrant program.

Based on this study, two recommendations were made to Region II Migrant Child Education:

1. As a result of this study, Region II is now requesting that information be included on all disenrollment forms as to why students are disenrolling; did they move, dropout, or lose eligibility in Migrant Education? This information will be entered in the student's MSRTS disenrollment record. The Region has been collecting the names of Migrant Student graduates for several years. In this way, data can be accessed from MSRTS at the end of each year to characterize the dropout problem.

2. To help deal with the problem of Migrant student dropouts, it would be useful to have information on the reasons students drop out. With this information, special dropout prevention programs could be developed which were tailored to the needs of students in certain areas.

YUBA CITY HIGH SCHOOL

STUDENT INFORMATION		DATA NEEDED FOR EACH STUDENT				
		DID THEY GRADUATE?			IF STILL ENROLLED	REASON FOR
NAME	BIRTHDATE	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	GIVE GRADE	LEAVING SCHOOL
Osmant, Deborah	01-22-67	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Pureural, Harnaik	04-20-67	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Sanchez, Maria	09-30-66	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Soto, Jesus	10-16-66	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Torres, Jose	10-04-65	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Wieber, Michel	01-27-67	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Bassi, Jagdish K.	06-04-66	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Lopez, Jorge	08-12-67	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Quintanilla, Mercedes	10-14-66	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Rameriz, Arturo	10-02-65	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Rodriguez, Enrique	04-08-67	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Solorio, Jose Piedad	08-29-67	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Kalotia, Krishna	03-30-66	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Bariana, Fauja	09-28-67	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Cantalon, Jesus	09 18-64	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Davilla, Nestor	07-23-67	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Guillen, Guillermo	09-26-66	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Guillen, Jaime	09-26-66	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____
Huerta, Jimmy	07-10-676	☐	☐	☐	_____	_____